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FOR NEA/ARP, DRL

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [AE](#)

SUBJECT: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE QUIETLY RELEASED FROM PRISON IN UAE

REFS: A) 08 ABU DHABI 1440, B) ABU DHABI 481

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Human rights organizations this week celebrated the revelation that two political prisoners in the UAE were quietly released in May without serving their full sentences. The UAEG has not issued any official statement on the release of these two men. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) On May 11, human rights publications revealed the releases from detention on May 11 of Hassan Ahmed Al Diqqi and on May 8 of Abdulla Subihat Al Alili. Mr. Al Diqqi's prison sentence was abruptly reduced from its original 10 years to six months (time already served). Mr. Al Alili served just over half of his three year sentence.

¶3. (SBU) Mr. Al Diqqi (ref A), a self-proclaimed political activist and human rights advocate and founder of the Emirates People's Rights Organization (EPRO or Emirates Pro), was arrested on charges of rape in July 2008. Prior to his arrest, authorities ordered him to stop all political activity and close his website (emiratespro.com) or face arrest on rape charges. It was against this backdrop and irregularities in his trial that the Geneva-based human rights group Alkarama lodged complaints with the UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the Human Rights Council in Geneva -- a body to which the UAEG made representations of its human rights record in December 2008.

¶4. (SBU) Mr. Al Alili, an official at the Ministry of Agriculture in the Emirate of Ajman, was, according to Alkarama, arrested and interrogated for his political views and held incommunicado in 2005. In 2007, he was brought before the Supreme Court, which sentenced him to three years imprisonment on charges of "obtaining secret information concerning state security". Al Alili alleges that he never met with his lawyer prior to his trial. Alkarama presented his case to the UPR in December 2008.

¶5. (SBU) Post's diplomatic note #1026 seeking clarification of these two cases (among others) in preparation for the Human Rights Report went unanswered. Without this clarification, we referred to the cases in general terms under the "Arbitrary Arrest or Detention" and "Political Prisoners and Detainees" sections of the 2008 Human Rights Report.

¶6. (C) The dramatic and sudden reductions in both sentences have been loosely linked in some circles to the recent release of a video depicting an Abu Dhabi ruling family member, Sheikh Issa bin Zayed, torturing an Afghan grain dealer (ref B). Human rights organizations infer that the wave of condemnation of the UAE's human rights record drove the decision to release these two men to avert further negative exposure. They are hopeful that other prisoners of conscience (nfi) will receive similar fates. Post finds this linkage plausible but cannot verify UAEG intent in releasing the two individuals.

OLSON